

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 164

PS 015 824

AUTHOR Martinez, Christine R.
TITLE Classroom Observations of Three Behavior Management Programs.
PUB DATE 28 Apr 86
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Problems; *Classroom Techniques; *Discipline; *Elementary School Students; *Elementary School Teachers; Grade 5; Grade 6; Intermediate Grades; Learning Disabilities; *Student Behavior; *Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

Three approaches to classroom management--assertive discipline, cooperative learning, and behavior management/mastery learning theory--are described. Assertive discipline was observed in a fifth-grade class taught by a teacher who would not allow students to interfere with her teaching or another child's learning. The assertive discipline approach is a system of understanding the rules of the class and accepting the consequences related to obeying and disobeying them. Cooperative learning was observed in a sixth-grade class during a lesson on "put-downs." Cooperative lessons involve content, social skills, and processing elements. Within each lesson ground rules were established. The classroom teacher led students through a five-step lesson plan that included an anticipatory set focusing on what "put-downs" are; instruction, including getting information and modeling; guided practice; and closure, including a final check for performance; and independent practice leading students to use "I-messages" instead of "putdowns." Use of behavior management and principles derived from mastery learning theory were observed in classes serving learning disabled students with severe behavior problems. This program stresses rules and consequences for student behavior through consistent and fair awarding of privileges and assignment of consequences. It is concluded that each program discussed can potentially be effective in managing classroom behavior. (RH)

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Classroom Observations of
Three Behavior Management Programs

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Christine R. Martinez

Masters Candidate

Dominican College

April 28, 1986

PS 015824

Introduction

Many kinds of behavior problems exist in the classroom. Different approaches to managing classroom behaviors have evolved as a result of the teacher needing to control and react appropriately to each type of behavior problem. This paper focuses on three management programs: assertive discipline, cooperative learning, and behavior management and mastery learning theory. Settings where these three programs are employed were observed.

Assertive Discipline

A regular, fifth-grade class that employed assertive discipline in Novato, California was observed. Assertive discipline can best be defined by describing the classroom policy. The teacher of the class believes that students can behave appropriately in the classroom. She will not tolerate a student interfering with her teaching or another child's learning. If a student chooses to break a rule in class the student's name is written on the board and the student calls home to notify parents. Additionally, the student is kept after school 20 minutes and takes home a green sheet.

A green sheet is another name for the teacher's discipline plan. The green sheet consists of: (a) the teacher's philosophy, (b) the classroom rules, (c) a note on the importance of the parents and teacher working together so the child will achieve better self-discipline, (d) a place for the teacher's and parents' signature, (e) the date, and (f) the date for a conference, if requested.

The classroom rules are posted on one wall of the classroom, visible for all students when seated at their desks. The rules are:

- 1) Listen to and follow all directions.
- 2) Do not be disruptive in class.
- 3) Use good manners.
- 4) Respect others and others' property.
- 5) Use language that is acceptable.
- 6) Keep hands to yourself.
- 7) Do not lean back in chairs.
- 8) Be prepared in class.
- 9) Stay in seat.
- 10) Be in class on time.
- 11) Ask permission to leave the room.

It should be noted that the rules are discussed in class at the beginning of the year and a description of what is expected and tolerated in the classroom is sent home to the parents.

Students are allowed three green sheets a month before a conference is set, in which the student has to call home to make the appointment. If a month goes by without a student getting a green sheet the child gets a special pass for "no homework" and an award for great behavior. If a school quarter goes by without a student getting a green sheet the child gets two special passes for "no homework" and an award for great behavior. The teacher keeps records of green sheets, passes and awards given out.

Most of the rules deal with behavior problems. Rule #8 is the only one that deals with academics. The teacher stressed its

importance. If a child's homework is not completed, the child receives an "F", with no chance of making it up (unless it is an excused absence).

The class as a whole may earn bonus points. For each day that no names are on the board, 5 points are earned. When an accumulated 25 points are earned the students get to pick a prize. The prizes are:

- 1) Going to the yogurt store *
- 2) Pizza Day!
- 3) Free-choice movie and popcorn
- 4) Free homework pass
- 5) Crazy Clothes Day!
- 6) Snack Day!

* The students pay for their own food.

To summarize, this program is a system of understanding the class rules and accepting the consequences, either negative or positive. The teacher claimed the program has been quite effective. The students know where they stand at all times. The teacher rarely needs to reprimand the students, because students are aware of the rules. Based on what was observed, it appeared that the program was fair, and appropriate, with clearly defined limits. The teacher followed the structure so there was a clear link between behavior and consequences. The students were well-behaved, and humor and warmth were apparent among the teacher-student relationships and the student-student relationships.

Cooperative Learning

The Marin County Office of Education defines cooperative

learning as an instructional method in which students of all levels of performance work interdependently toward two common goals: the task/content and the process/social skills. The benefits of cooperative learning are said to include increased academic achievement, higher self-esteem, and greater acceptance of each other's differences.

A regular, sixth-grade class in Tiburon, California that was being videotaped for a cooperative learning lesson was observed. The lesson was on "put-downs", a social skill. It should be acknowledged that cooperative learning consists of many lessons in various skill areas, but attention will be paid to this social skill only.

In general, there are three elements of all cooperative lessons: content, social skills, and processing (discussion). Within each lesson there are ground rules: (a) take turns, (b) stay on task, (c) contribute, (d) let each person finish, and (e) no put-downs. Sometimes when the students are learning the lessons they are divided into groups. The groups consist of a leveler, a recorder, a contributor and an on-task person.

A five-step lesson plan to teach the social skill "no put-downs" was instructed by the teacher. "No put-downs" is also one of the ground rules. Step I was titled the Anticipatory Set. It involved focusing on what put-downs are, for example, "shut up!" and "That's a dumb idea.", reviewing the ground rules, and stating the purpose and objectives of the lesson. The objectives were to verbally and in writing be able to list one important way that put-downs hinder the cooperative group

process, and change a put-down or "you-message" into an "I-message".

Step II, titled Instruction, included getting information, and modeling. Put-downs and "you-messages", for example, "You always have to be first.", were defined by the teacher and the students. Then a group of students role-played a teacher-designed scenario, expressing put-downs. After the role-play, a discussion was led in which the students generated a list of ways put-downs hinder a group's productivity, for example, breaks group up, and as a consequence grade suffers. This was followed by training in "I-messages". An "I-message" is a statement in which one specifies the feelings one has toward the behavior of the other person in the situation. The students then practiced the "I-message" model: "I feel _____ when (name) _____." The teacher said various messages and checked their understanding of "I" and "You-messages" using the following procedure: students signaled by holding a #1 card for true and a #2 card for false.

In Step III, Guided Practice, the students were divided into groups. From the list of put-downs, they selected the one put-down that was the biggest hindrance to productivity and explained why. This was recorded. Then worksheets with put-down statements were given to each student. The students changed the put-downs into "I-messages".

Step IV, Closure, included a final check for performance. The recorder reported on how the group responded to the previous tasks. A de-briefing discussion followed. The teacher asked the student the following questions:

- 1) Were there put-downs in your group while you were

working on your tasks?

2) If so, how were they handled?

3) Did you recognize any "I-messages"?

Step V, Independent Practice, stated the final point. The students should continue to use "I-messages" instead of put-downs to better communicate their thoughts and feelings.

From what was observed, cooperative learning appears to be successful if given the appropriate conditions. That is, the lesson was successful because of an animated, well-trained teacher, a thorough, necessary lesson plan and a sufficient time allotment. However, this type of behavior management/training does not seem very practical or useful for most academic settings and conditions, such as having a well-trained teacher and enough time. A noticed limitation of cooperative learning was that it seemed to take a long time to teach, and therefore, seemed to take a long time to learn. Another noticed limitation of the lesson involved the use of the video camera. It is not known, but perhaps the presence of the camera influenced the behavior and communication observed.

Behavior Management and Mastery Learning Theory

The Windsor Program uses behavior management and mastery learning theory principles to operate classroom programs for learning disabled (LD) students with severe behavior problems. The Windsor Center is located in Windsor, California, and it interacts closely with the Sonoma County Office of Education, Department of Special Education. The center has three classes on campus and three satellite classes, all of which provide

services for students from age five to 22 years.

The students at the Windsor Program range in cognitive and academic ability. However, the background among all students includes a history of behaviors that have been unmanageable in less restrictive settings. The program is aimed at teaching students to be responsible for, and in control of, their own behavior. This is exercised through the program's three major systems: the Level System, Step System, and Reintegration System. The entire program stresses rules and consequences for student behavior through consistent and fair privileges and consequences. The staff is expected to provide appropriate, positive role-models for the students to follow, thereby following the rules of conduct that the the students have to observe.

The Level System describes the range of behaviors that require specific intervention. The behavioral areas include people (social), things (usage of materials), and places (assigned locations). Behaviors and consequences are classified into 6 levels:

<u>Level</u>	<u>Type of Behavior</u>	<u>Consequences</u>
I	appropriate	all intensities/ reinforced
II	inappropriate	low intensity/ systematically ignored
III	inappropriate	medium intensity/ timed-out
IV	inappropriate	high intensity/ in-class suspension
V	inappropriate	very high intensity/ suspension
VI	inappropriate	illegal intensity/ sheriff called

The consequences act in accord with relevant laws, government

codes and Board of Education policy. All staff are to enforce consequences when behaviors occur. Before placement is even made, the rules and procedures of the Level System are discussed with the parents and the students.

The Step System provides a hierarchy of privileges so that student motivation is kept high. Reinforcement is aimed at responsibility, self-discipline, and student participation for goal-setting and data keeping. An example for reaching one of the highest steps is when a student is trusted to run school errands for a teacher. This means that the student can use the teacher's school keys.

The Reintegration System provides support for the student during the reintegration phase. Before a student's placement and throughout the placement, the Windsor staff works closely with the target site. At the same time, the teacher teaches the student to practice behaviors needed to succeed at the target site. This leads to a smoother, more successful reintegration.

To account for the three systems, data is collected hourly for posting. The systems presently exist on hand-written classroom charts and in notebook-size manuals. Teachers and aides are responsible for data keeping. The teachers at the center are given one day off a week from teaching to plan lessons for the following week, making it easier to meet the program requirements.

Based on classroom observation and interviews with two staff teachers, the Windsor Program is extremely effective for the population it serves. The students at the center respond positively to the structure, the system and the staff. The program is highly structured, capitalizing on successful aspects

from mastery learning and reinforcement theories. Though the program creates an atmosphere that is positive, and appropriate role-modeling is evident, the center seems to lack a feeling of warmth. Perhaps this is due to the needs of the students and the types of severe behavior problems they have. Or, perhaps the closeness is there, but is disguised in other forms constructed in the program that were not readily observed.

Conclusions and Implications

Each of the behavior management programs discussed has the ability to be effective in managing classroom behavior. The assertive discipline program appeared to work with regular students, stressing rules, consequences and a sense of responsibility for one's behavior. The lesson on cooperative learning seemed to work with regular students, emphasizing the social skill of "no put-downs", yet long-term effectiveness of using the social skill is not known. The Windsor Program appeared successful with LD, severe behavior problem students, using the Level, Step, and Reintegration systems.

Based on the programs observed in practice, assertive discipline and the Windsor Program seemed the most practical and beneficial to use with the populations they served. Therefore, the use of these programs is encouraged if dealing with those types of students. Cooperative learning, though important to know, does not seem practical to use in the classroom. The lessons take too long to implement. Perhaps the lessons could be modified and put to use as rules in an assertive discipline setting.

Both assertive discipline and the Windsor Program promote

students taking responsibility for their actions. They both give out rewards and dispense immediate disciplinary actions. They both support parent involvement. Structurally, they are similar. The only distinction noticed between the programs was that the intensity of the programs are different in order to match the needs of the population. It is curious how two separate programs, assertive discipline and behavior management and mastery learning theory, call themselves by different names and yet in reality are quite similar. Basically, the programs are striving for the same goal, that of fostering student responsibility.